

welfare, Medicare, Medicaid and other third party markets. Restricting Nebraska optometrists from enhancing their scope of practice increases the cost of delivering quality vision care to the Nebraska consumer. Just like dentistry and podiatry, optometry must pierce the veil of therapeutic legislation to provide maximum health care for the citizens of Nebraska. Last year this body passed LB 407. Now, LB 407, as you recall, outlines the procedure that health care providers must submit to in order to make any changes in the statutes relating to its practices. LB 407 was hailed by the medical profession as a great step forward in that mainly the process would end the turf battles that have often taken place here in the Legislature. I think we are going to find out today how well 407 works and I'm sure that we'll come out on a positive note. Now, you recall, in the LB 407 process, our director of health appoints a Technical Review Committee. LB 131 was reviewed over a five-month period. Every possible objection to this bill was argued, testified to, and deliberated by the Technical Review Committee. When the smoke had cleared, the committee voted 4 to 2 for the bill that is now before you with the committee amendments. Numerous amendments to defeat this bill or water it down were presented to the Technical Review Committee by the ophthalmologists serving on the committee. All of these amendments were rejected. The 407 process has produced a lot of information that supports my bill. Senator Morehead and others will share this information with you. I ask you to listen and then vote for the bill. Over the past five years the optometrists of this state have patiently worked for passage of this legislation. They have negotiated with medicine, taken thousands of dollars of additional education, much of which was presented by medical doctors. The optometrists have privately raised thousands of dollars and built and equipped one of the finest clinical centers in the region, the Omni Center in Omaha. This was in direct response to the medical community's opposition to this bill because there wasn't a clinical education facility for optometry in Nebraska. This objection has been adequately taken care of. In response to Governor Kerrey's concern last year, the Optometric Referral and Treatment Center has teaching attachments on all of its instrumentation so that the resident ophthalmologist and visiting MDs can supervise practicing optometrists in Nebraska. Over 165 of our practicing doctors have taken additional training from the staff at this center over the last six months. Now, in order to strengthen my resolve in